

SHORT REMARKS

ON THE

SITUATION

OF THE



FRENCH REFUGEES,

SUBMITTED TO THE ATTENTION OF

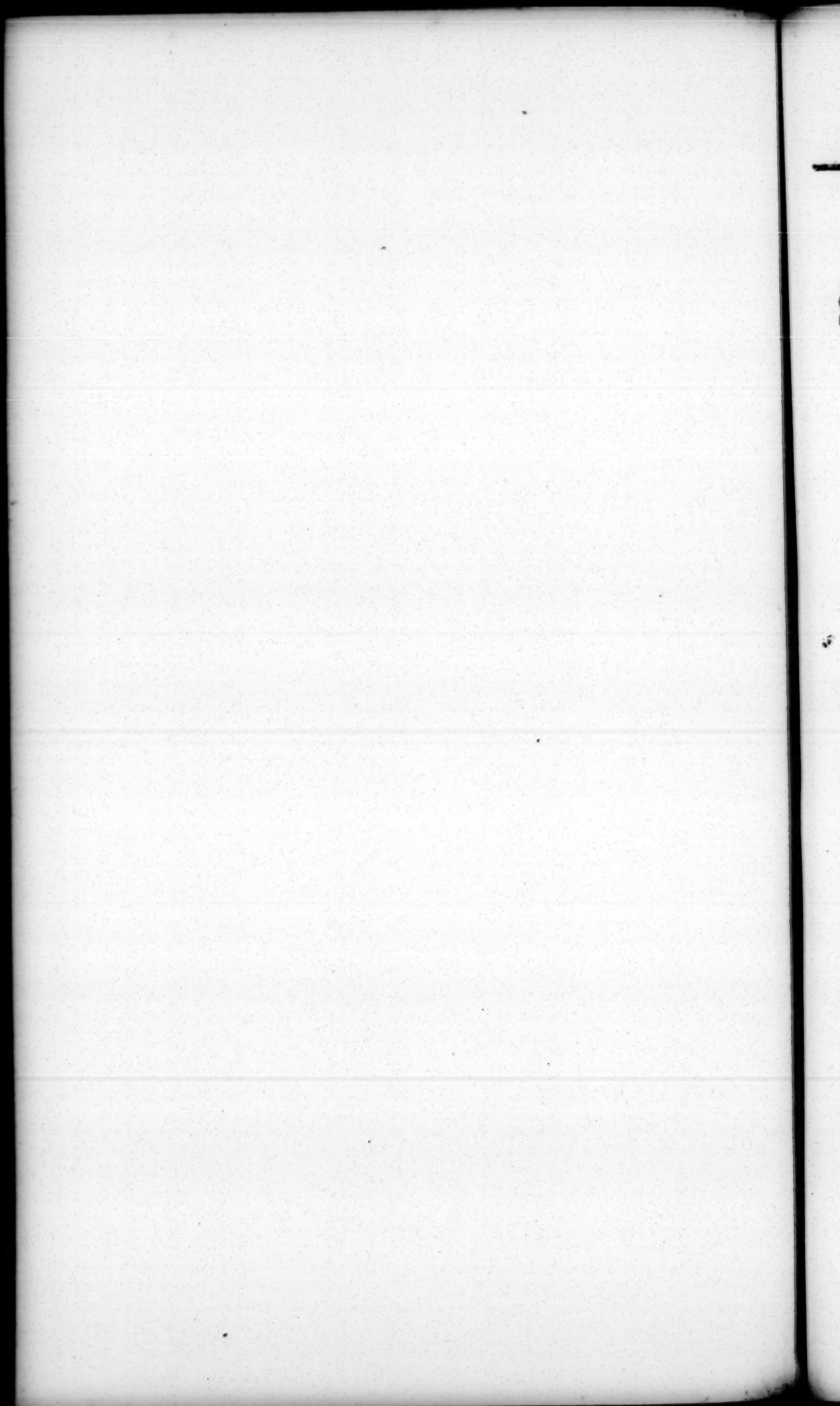
THE MINISTER.

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1792.



SHORT REMARKS,

&c.

S I R,

WITH as slender pretensions to political knowledge as, perhaps, any individual in the kingdom, permit me, however, to offer my sentiments on a subject daily becoming more and more a topic of private conversation, and surely of public concern. Though I decline giving my name, I trust I may escape the certainty of being disregarded, which an anonymous address usually, however unjustly, provokes.

The importation of Refugees from the French coast has already become a matter by no means below the attention of government ; but you seem, as yet, without any fixed plan even for the present inconvenience. When then may we expect an effectual antidote against the more serious grievance which the farther importation, or the *unlimited continuance* of them amongst us must inevitably produce ? Scattered, as they are, about our coasts, the rascally part of our countrymen have long since taken the ungenerous advantage of raising the price of all their provisions, which must come into the common market. The poor, of course, grumble ; and with reason. Hard as they before found it to support a numerous family, they already begin to discover, that in process of a very short period of the same importation, it may become

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come altogether impracticable. What then must be the natural consequence, but that what are mere murmurs now, will obviously grow into settled and determined discontents? Against such an event, surely you should guard with the same precaution as if they were inevitable.

The English character, though generous, does not exactly approve of its own immediate interest being absolutely sacrificed to that of others: it is blunt, and cannot be induced to say "welcome," when it does not feel that you really are so: and it is apt to remonstrate in very plain terms, should you attempt to make yourself so, unasked.

Hitherto it has only been viewed in the simple light of local inconvenience. It might
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not, perhaps, prove beneath an abler pen to set it in the stronger light of national consequence ; with reference to the total inattention which has hitherto been paid to the *character* or *disposition* of the individuals who compose this considerable body of strangers ; under circumstances which are at present, in some instances, ceasing to be *doubtful* ; and may probably become, ere long, more than suspected. Had the Duke of Brunswick's affairs prospered, as it was generally expected they would have done ; it was by no means an extravagant idea, that we should have been honoured by at least a partial visit from the *Jacobins*. Had that event taken place, I am much mistaken and misinformed, if a general alarm had not pervaded the political part of the whole kingdom. That alarm might possibly have come too late ;

though, thank God, we are pretty free from the actual members of the Jacobin *club*, we are yet by no means deficient in professed avowers and defenders of their principles. What may be of use now, may, on a contingent necessity, do rather harm than good. The activity arising from such an impulse of precaution, which, in the present case, stops the mischief, even in embryo; who can say that in the heat of any general anxiety, may not produce outrage? Of that, I think, we have seen too shocking a specimen, to run the most distant hazard of having it repeated under any possible chain of circumstances, or in any quarter of the globe.

I would not wish to betray a suspicion unworthy a generous nation; much less, however, would I willingly disregard that
prudence

prudence under certain circumstances, the neglect of which might expose not only the wisdom, but the safety of a whole people. Though the majority, perhaps, nearly the entire body of Refugees profess a common cause in flying their country ; yet it by no means follows, that the same motive has actuated them all. And as many, no doubt, have come hither under the mask of escaping persecution, for the precise *purpose* of sinister intentions ; no sooner have they found themselves secure in their persons, than their restless minds, ever intent on some project or another, have assiduously applied themselves either to devise a plan by which they may get out of the well upon our shoulders ; or if they cannot, to pull us in with them. If they fail in effecting their object of re-instating themselves by means of our interference, they will at all events attempt

tempt to quarter themselves upon us for life.

The danger of the one, and the injustice of the other, should equally guard us against the probable attempt of either. Amidst the universal rage for intermeddling in the affairs of other powers, which has of late years gone forth into the world, we alone are happily exempted from the contagion. The consequence is, that we alone are looked up to as the probable umpire in this great cause of nations. The moment we become a party concerned, we quit that high ground on which we stand; and from that moment, all the advantages of our situation vanish.

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I should hope it were incompatible with the common sense of England to be guilty of so gross an *infatuation* ! The solid commercial advantages we are daily deriving from this individual circumstance, are innumerable : and it may perhaps be safely asserted, that so long as we stand aloof, we shall flourish,—and no longer.

It is generally understood, that all seditious publications must cease to expect impunity ; and that all foreigners, tending in the remotest degree to disturb the tranquillity of this country, will assuredly meet with punishment. But why expose them to the temptation of mischief ? Why not put it out of their power to hurt either us, or themselves ? In affording them personal protection from *their* countrymen, we do little or
nothing,

nothing, unless we at the same time guard them against the suspicions of our own. This cannot be done, so long as they continue scattered about in perpetual probability of giving offence.

By collecting them in a body, you will give them an opportunity of assisting each other, and prevent their interfering with the private interest or concerns of the poorest of our own people. The scruples, the suspicions, the murmurs of the *populace* will thus, and perhaps thus only, be appeased. Those indeed, of whom there are always too many, who are determined to cavil, may convert this very step into a ground for alarm of yet greater magnitude. The very act of embodying them will to them be a ground of apprehension, lest the aggregate mischief

of undisturbed debate and deliberation may exceed the individual opportunity of mischievous association. If, indeed, there were established no counteracting power, we might readily admit this : but when embodied, let regulations of conduct, and restrictions of action, be established and enforced. Let not a false delicacy expose the tranquillity of a whole people, if not to real danger, certainly to perpetual alarms.

In this land of freedom, the very name of *Spy* is a sufficient passport to insult ; and the bare idea of infringing upon the liberty of the subject creates revolt. But the expediency of keeping a proper watch over the conduct of entire strangers is as readily admitted, as the restraint would be endured by
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men habituated from their cradles to the constant risque of a lettre de cachet.

A subscription is entered upon in their behalf, which, in its infancy, bespoke the compassion and the generosity of this country. The mode of application is hitherto unsettled ; because, from their scattered situations, it is scarce possible to apply it with effect. Concentrate the objects, and the bounty becomes obvious in its application, and effectual in its relief. That individual mistrust and backwardness in some instances, which *now* impede the progress of the subscription, would then be as rapidly succeeded by that prompt munificence which has ever characterised us. So far their immediate necessities would be provided for, in setting apart public buildings
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for their reception, and public bounty for their support. Yet, the end of benevolence being answered, justice prompts us to guard against oppression towards our own countrymen. Some plan should be, therefore, adopted to prevent their becoming a burthen for life. Most of them, almost all, from their profession, are disqualified from gaining themselves a livelihood by any adequate service. They have not that labour to give in exchange for their support, which the universal commerce of the world has established as necessary; and not having that, they cannot but become a dead weight on the community. Fifteen or twenty thousand *annuitants* would prove no very palatable ingredient in our current taxes. And let the amount of the national subscription be ever so flattering, surely the most sanguine

Refugee cannot reasonably look forward to a repetition of the like bounty ; and when *this* is exhausted, will they themselves thank us for affording them a climate to starve in ? Any boy of fifteen knows, and often *feels*, the force of the truth, that this little island, flourishing and happy as it may be, can always produce, among its own natives, subjects sufficient to awaken the compassion, and draw upon the benevolence, of the feeling heart. Candidates, I fear, will never fail us, so long as the miseries of human nature exist, who, in spite of the most meritorious exertions, demand all that the affluent are disposed, or the benevolent are perhaps able, to do for them.

To rescue from destruction any object of persecution, is a duty, and to protect it, is a
virtue ;

virtue ; but to continue that protection to the prejudice of more rightful claimants, is neither a duty, nor a virtue.

But for the new aspect of affairs in France, candour ventured to hope, that their countrymen would have opened their eyes to the disgrace of that conduct which rendered flight necessary ; and that the time was not far distant, when every man might have returned in peace, and have resumed that station in society which he had quitted ; and which, in fact, they ought not to have deserted : for they set out on a principle radically wrong. The oaths which they were required to take, were, I believe, merely of a political nature, not aiming to compel them to any material renunciation of their religion, as they would have it supposed. Indeed their conduct, through

through the whole affair, stands in need of a provocation, not less cogent. The fact is, the first oaths which were proposed to them, struck a little deep at their temporal interests: and I fear, with the generality of mankind, that will ever operate with nearly an equal, in some instances with a superior, force, as if their eternal interests were invaded. When life is at stake, for mere political opinion, I think a man betrays more folly than fortitude, in affecting to sacrifice every thing to that opinion, be it what it may. Is this a time, or an occasion, for exerting the utmost powers of a man's nature? The deliberate surrender of life or country demands a better cause than any temporal concern can boast. If they chuse positively to reject the proposed oaths, why did they not take up arms—associate—and defend

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themselves like men? They tell us, they were proscribed :—so were the Emigrants. “ But had we taken up arms,” say they—“ our property had been confiscated.”—The only difference *now* is, that they have forfeited by flight just as much, without the credit of lending an arm to the common cause ; or without the faintest endeavour to do themselves justice. Their conduct has surely been a mixture of pride, stubbornness, and cowardice. Pride, in affecting to set themselves, as a professional body, above the level of other men, whose interests were of equal consequence, and yet were not thought necessary to be so preposterously exaggerated. Stubbornness, in holding out against their own conviction. Cowardice, in not manfully arming in their own defence ; to say nothing of meanness, in sheltering themselves
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under an ostensible, and consequently a false, necessity, to screen the real and insufficient motive of their conduct.

All hopes, however, of being *invited* to return appear *now* more distant than ever; consequently it is high time for us to reflect, whether we are *justified* in *extending* a protection which the circumstances of the moment called upon us to offer, to an indefinite *necessity* of being burthened *in eternum*—to the obvious and unwarrantable prejudice of our own industrious and distressed poor. *Indiscriminate* compliance is, indeed, *called* good nature; but it is notoriously inseparable from the idea of folly: because experience daily laments the immediate—often irreparable mischief it brings upon its possessor; while the object of its sacrifice almost invari-

ably only *mocks its cullibility*. In the present case, *unconditional* benevolence ceases to be charity: and we may live to repent even our prodigality as insufficient, and the obligation requited with base ingratitude.

But my design is not so much to reason upon their past conduct, as to prescribe for their future. A correct *list* should be drawn out of all those who profess to be in a condition to support themselves; and all those who were not included in that list, should be obliged to live with their countrymen in those public buildings set apart for their exclusive reception. The former party should be obliged to give in their place of abode, with their names; and in case of removal, to give immediate notice of it. By these means, we should have no individual among them,

them, to whom instant application and access might not be had on any emergency : it would impress them with an idea of *responsibility*, and would operate accordingly on their good behaviour. In this manner they might be supported in security themselves, without molesting us by their actual conduct, or disturbing us with apprehensions of mischief. And if ever affairs in their own country should assume an aspect of toleration, all those who were supported by the public bounty, should be *obliged* to return thither ; those who remained among us, should still continue to be responsible for their conduct, by giving in their names and residence. It is not necessary that this list should be exposed to public curiosity ; it should rest in the possession of the minister. This would obviate any scruples the most delicate among them

them might entertain, in being exposed to general knowledge ; and effectually answers every purpose of that system of police to which they have been accustomed, and by which they would not fail of being very materially influenced.

Thus far I had proceeded while in the *country*, where I had witnessed many of their distresses, and where I have had opportunities of hearing the pitiable part of their history. In the *metropolis*, the scene is quite changed ; and here, to my astonishment, I learn of more *villainy* than distress. It is a truth which may well excite amazement and indignation, that benevolently as they have been received, they have already turned to sting the bosom which cherishes them ! Human nature revolts at the base assertion. There are among
 them,

them, at this moment, men whose sole object and employment is, to sow discontent and sedition. That agents are hourly busied in forestalling grain for exportation, is as notorious as it is a scandalous fact. Wheat, to an enormous amount, has been bought up within these few weeks; and there is reason to believe that the most part, if not all, has been actually carried out of the kingdom. That this should have been suffered, is almost as incredible, as it is disgraceful,

It is a notorious fact, that those who are content to accept an *asylum* among us, cannot conceal their envy and jealousy of the tranquillity of this country : but with all the insult of affected pity deplore, in terms which but too strongly mark their *wishes*, the probability of the contagion's reaching us. When
men

men avowedly spread sedition and treason, surely they become full as much objects of the summary justice of the country, as the thief who plunders, or the villain who assassinates. If this country does not suffer from its absurd backwardness to offend its most inveterate foes, it will not proceed from any want of an insolent confidence which its false delicacy and timidity authorise them to assume. Passive toleration, under certain circumstances, constitutes in itself, politically, no trifling degree of actual criminality : if it is not misprision of treason, is it not something worse ? It is by no means an uncommon sentiment, that our supineness requires something little short of positive national danger from without, to rouse us from our lethargic *cul-
libility* from within. France, flushed with her late conquests, intoxicated with success,

no longer satisfied with acting on the defensive, has already commenced an offensive campaign, and talks high of future projects. To what end can she more gratefully turn our generous conduct towards her, than in meditating an invasion of this country, as an adequate return for the protection we have afforded her countrymen ?

When the proclamation was issued, many thought it a dangerous measure, because unnecessary : it has proved the danger only to have existed in its eventual omission. Even those who wondered at the time, at the step's being determined on, are yet more astonished *now*, at its being so feebly enforced. Threats, left unexecuted, had much better never have been pronounced ; they only tend to weaken authority, and to strengthen treason ; to em-

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bolden cowards, and to render power ridiculous. Every means, which envy, malice, ingratitude can devise to infatuate this country with a spirit of sedition and revolt, are at this moment secretly at work ; nor will any pains be spared, nor any respite given to the labour of reducing us to the same level with themselves. And shall we dare to call ourselves Englishmen, and tamely submit to wait the issue of the experiment ? Forbid it virtue—forbid it every honest impulse of manhood !

*Nam TUA res agitur, Paries cum proximus ardet,
Et neglecta, solent incendia fumere vires.*

Should there be found a nation so lost to all sense of duty, as to suffer a multitude, under the plausible pretext of seeking protection, to convert their asylum into a closet of

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conspiracy, what evil can befall that nation, which it does not more than merit? It will not even be attempted to be denied, that mischievous strangers are among us, notoriously: and if the *rest* were not at least *consenting* to their views, sound policy, if not gratitude, should demand of them that exposition of individuals, which their personal knowledge fully enables them to command. That there are a few foreign individuals, who are sincerely scandalized at the baseness of their views, I am disposed to believe: and that they would honestly stand forth in unmasking a scoundrel, I am willing to hope. And I *trust* that the importunate demands of policy and self-interest would *wring* from them that service, which, perhaps, neither gratitude nor honour would voluntarily *tender*,

It may not be advancing too much to prophesy, that, as a nation, we shall not be *secure*, till we purge the kingdom of them *all*. If the measure should appear harsh—the contrary system would be more than foolhardy.

“Quod tu Romane, caveto.”

Whatever evils the remote chance of an invasion might bring with it, such an event alone, perhaps, is adequate to the effectually setting aside those restless and intermeddling spirits, who, for want of proper employment, are ripe for any proposed mischief. Such an event, we all know, and *feel*, would instantly rouse the spirit of the nation ; force it to purge itself of every individual miscreant ; to act with that energy, of which it has often proved itself so capable, and to assume the irresistible unanimity of one man.

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Such a conduct would prove a positive blessing, almost, by *whatever* means it were provoked.

This country stands, at present, conspicuous for its tranquillity, its prosperity, its resources ; and as such, is doubtless become an object for envy to discharge her whole artillery of intrigues to involve us in the general cabal. This is a consideration, perhaps not beneath the speedy and most serious attention of a Minister—nor unbecoming the personal regard of a faithful monarch !

“ Si Pergama dextrâ
“ Defendi possent, etiam *hâc* defensa fuissent.”

In the spirit of benevolence which pervades this country, we are hourly increasing an evil ; numbers are induced to come hither,

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from the liberality and tranquillity which we hold out to them. Many who are neither under absolute persecution, nor want, prefer a very scanty subsistence, with protection, to the labour of acquiring one, so precarious, if obtained, in their own fortuitous republic.

Humanity will not cease to regret her inability, through their own knavery, to shelter them from their fate : yet equity demands, and self-preservation is peremptory, that the tide of our bounty should be diverted into safer channels. That it be henceforth appropriated to the security of landing them on another coast : for men, who are incapable of learning either gratitude or honour, circumstanced as they are, must be referred to the sharp school of experience to repent their depravity. It is their own act and deed, nor
have

have they any one but themselves to thank, for whatever evils may befall them.

As a Minister, you may, perhaps, think yourself *above* noticing the hints of an obscure individual. But, remember, the times do not admit of temporising ; and that, as a Minister, you would be noticed for unwarrantable neglect.

C I V I S.

F I N I S.

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